

The *ReLo*

Review



2004 - I

EDITORIAL

First of all, I must say that I feel very fortunate to be working in this region. Since I arrived just over a year ago, I have had the great privilege of getting to know so many wonderful, dedicated, and kind professionals in the field of English Language Teaching. Furthermore, I have had the immense pleasure of visiting many of the historic, cultural, and natural treasures of the region. Most importantly, I have had the honor to experience firsthand the hospitality and friendship of so many individuals and institutions in my host countries. For all this and more, I am truly grateful, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Our office is very pleased to initiate this newsletter, which we hope will create greater collaboration among the ELT institutions in the eight countries of the region. We invite you to submit brief articles about your experiences, activities, and ideas related to English Language Teaching in order to share them with your colleagues in the neighboring countries. By sharing our dilemmas, problems, innovations, and successes, we can help each other to reach our common goal—to create a better world through education.

So, I welcome you to "The RELO Review," which I hope you will find both entertaining and enriching.



I feel very fortunate to be part of this new adventure and also honored to have the opportunity to work with so many English teaching professionals. Please contact our office and let us know what your needs, challenges, plans, and projects are. We are looking forward to working with all of you.

Carmen Chinchilla, Editor



Michael Rudder, RELO

Saludos muy cordiales, Michael

XX National Conference for English Teachers in San José

The Centro Cultural Costarricense Norteamericano hosted the XX National Conference for Teachers of English January 28-30, 2004 on the theme, "Pursuing Standards for a Competitive World." Approximately 600 English teachers and program coordinators from throughout Central America participated in the three-day event. The Regional English Language Office sponsored an interactive satellite conference on "The Use of Technology in ELT" with Professor Christine Meloni from George Washington University.

The opening ceremony included the participation of U.S. Ambassador John J. Danilovich as well as other dignitaries from the Ministry of Public Education and the embassies of the United Kingdom and Canada. In the closing ceremony a special tribute was made to Maria Eugenia Flores for her years of hard work and dedication to the NCTE. The event, deemed a big success by the organizers and participants, received national media coverage.



Academic Specialist Visit to Costa Rica

Public school teachers of English throughout Costa Rica now have unprecedented access to teaching resources on the Internet, thanks to U.S. Academic Specialist Leslie Opp-Beckman from the University of Oregon. From November 24 until December 5, 2003 Professor Opp-Beckman conducted intensive workshops on the use of Internet resources for English Language Teaching first with the Regional English Teaching Advisors from the Ministry of Public Education and subsequently with English teachers in five provinces of Costa Rica. The program yielded immediate results, as teachers, most of whom had never accessed the Internet for teaching materials, began downloading many of the available and free resources to implement in their classrooms. The impact is expected to trickle throughout the country, as more and more schools gain computers and Internet access.

WorldTeach in Costa Rica

On January 14, 2004 the 22 newly arrived WorldTeach Volunteers in Costa Rica participated in a methodology workshop conducted by RELO Michael Rudder. Through collaboration with the Ministry of Public Education, the Volunteers have been assigned to rural primary schools, where human and material resources are most needed in the area of English Language Teaching. The WorldTeach Volunteers will enhance the teaching of English for hundreds of primary school children in rural areas of Costa Rica.

English Teaching and Peace Corps

Peace Corps volunteers in Costa Rica are teaching English. Although such classes do not fit into their project descriptions—which fall under two categories, rural community development and urban youth and families at risk—they find them easy to justify. Teaching English to locals, after all, is an integral part of fulfilling the Peace Corps Mission—cultural exchange and increased understanding between the U.S. and other nations.

It is a difficult endeavor, however, because most volunteers have very little or no experience in teaching English. Luckily, though, they have help nearby. Through the generosity of RELO, Dr. Michael Rudder, and various other resources, volunteers have found lesson plans, textbooks, and visual aids they can use.

As of now, many volunteers are in the midst of their first round of classes. Disregarding the basic mistakes all beginners make, all feel that their classes have been quite successful. More important, however, is that they are provid-

ing a great deal of help immersing the volunteer in his or her community. One volunteer, who wishes to remain anonymous, commented: "When I first arrived, I felt like no one knew me. Now, after teaching English, I am bombarded by kids and adults yelling 'teacher!' in greeting every time I walk down the street! It really feels good!"

So it just goes to show that English teaching and Peace Corps go hand-in-hand. On the one hand, it helps the volunteer become involved and "known" in his or her community. On the other hand, it helps complete that integral step leading towards international peace, harmony, and understanding that is so important to the organization's mission in the world today.

Brian Padilla, Peace Corps Volunteer



Puerto Jiménez, Costa Rica

Panama TESOL

The 17th Annual Congress for Panama TESOL was held in Panama City September 26-28, 2003. The theme of the event, "Toward Proficiency in English for the Centennial," drew approximately 150 teachers of English and program coordinators from throughout the country to discuss the national goal to expand English teaching to all levels of the public schools and to implement a more communicative methodology in the classrooms. The conference received generous support from the U.S. Embassy, including a video-conference, "ESL Standards for Teaching English," with Dr. Brock Brady from American University in Washington, DC. Other featured U.S. speakers were English Language Specialist, Dr. Paulette Dale, Regional English Language Officer, Dr. Michael Rudder, and English Language Fellow, Heather Linville. Last year Panama passed legislation to include English teaching in the curriculum at all levels of public education, and the TESOL conference helped to consolidate the efforts of the major academic institutions and the Ministry of Education to face this challenge.



PanTESOL Summer Seminar

With the support of the University of Panama, the Ministry of Education, and the U.S Embassy, Panama TESOL conducted its annual Summer Seminar for English teachers February 9-13, 2004 with the theme, "Getting Ahead with English." Approximately 60 local teachers participated in the series of workshops. The enthusiastic participants had the task of designing their own model lessons incorporating ideas and activities presented during the week, and they presented their models on the last day of the conference.

ELF in Panama

Panama-based English Teaching Fellow Heather Linville has successfully launched for teachers of English a series of

professional development workshops extending from December to June. The eight workshops deal with issues of concern and the special needs of local teachers. The program recently received the endorsement of the Ministry of Education, thereby increasing both publicity and participation. With the Ministry approval public school teachers now earn "credits" for participating in the workshops.

In addition, ELF Linville received a grant from the U.S. Embassy to design a course in "English for Primary School Teachers," to be offered free to 20 teachers during their vacation. Her work is already making a very valuable impact on the development of teachers in a country where English instruction has recently been given a greater focus nationwide.

X Annual Conference for Teachers of English at UNACHI

The Autonomous University of Chiriquí hosted its X annual conference for teachers of English February 2-6, 2004 with the theme, "Meeting Classroom Challenges: Innovations for Teachers and Trainers." The 150 participants included local English teachers as well as a large number of university students preparing to be English teachers. RELO Michael Rudder conducted two plenary sessions during the conference. The organizers and speakers were delighted with the large turnout and the success of the event.

Academic Specialist in Panama

English Language Specialist, Dr. Paulette Dale from Miami Dade Community College, helped to promote and enhance the teaching of American English in Panama through a university course and other presentations September 29-October 31, 2003. At the University of Panama she taught a 64-hour course in English Syntax and Semantics to M.A. graduate students in TESOL. Most of the students are present or future teachers of English. In addition, she conducted a workshop on pronunciation to approximately 200 English majors and faculty as part of the university's celebration of "English Week."

GUATEMALA

National Conference for Teachers of English in Guatemala

November 3-5, 2003 the Instituto Guatemalteco Americano hosted the XXII National Conference for Teachers of English with the theme "Pathways to Success in ELT." The conference drew a record number of participants from both public and private academic institutions with almost 900 teachers, program coordinators, and textbook publishers. Distinguished plenary speakers included H. Douglas Brown, Mary Ann Christison, Keith Folse, and Mickey Rogers. From the U.S. Embassy there was participation by CAO Ida Heckenbach and RELO Michael Rudder.

ELF in Guatemala

Guatemala-based English Language Fellow Dale Ehrlich organized and implemented on November 6, 2003 an "Exposition" for the English program at the Universidad Rafael Landívar in Guatemala City to enable students to meet the English teaching staff and learn more about the options for pursuing their studies in English. Other people were present to disseminate information about the Fulbright Program and about opportunities for university study in the U.S. The event included games and prizes, among which was a free semester of English instruction, and received enthusiastic participation by the university students and staff.

HONDURAS

National Conference for English Teachers in Honduras

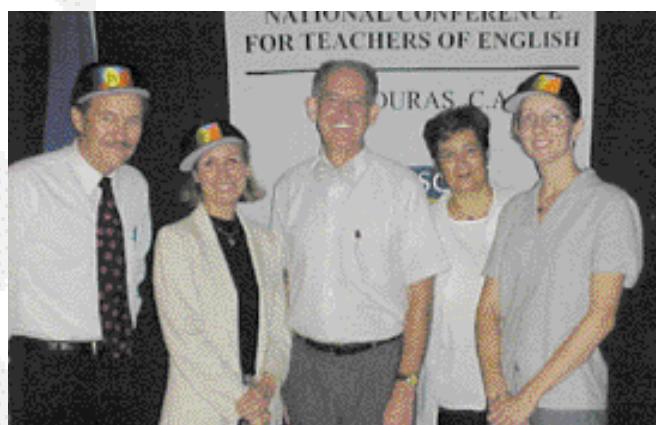
With the sponsorship of the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán, the Centro Cultural Sampedrano, and the U.S. Embassy, the III National Conference of Teachers of English offered opportunities for professional enhancement to approximately 400 teachers and administrators from throughout Honduras May 22-24, 2003. The conference theme was "The Joy of Teaching Foreign Languages," and the program included plenary sessions and pedagogical workshops by four American speakers: English Language Specialist Joan Friedenberg, Fulbright Professor Neil Anderson, English Language Teaching Fellow Jennifer Aly, and Regional English Language Officer Michael Rudder.

U.S. Ambassador Larry Palmer participated in the opening ceremony and praised the participating institutions and the teachers for their efforts to promote the status of English in Honduras. The event, which received national media coverage, also had the participation of the Vice Minister of Education, who stated that the national passion for football should be replicated in the field of education.

NICARAGUA

RELO in Nicaragua

As a result of the first visit of RELO Michael Rudder to Nicaragua September 17-24, 2003, the directors of the primary institutions for training English teachers in the cities of Managua and León demonstrated enthusiasm for collaborative projects to enhance teacher development both within their institutions and in the national public school system. The RELO made several presentations on communicative methodology to audiences of English teachers and program coordinators from the Binational Center, the three universities with teacher training programs, and the Ministry of Education. The RELO also met with the new Vice Minister of Education, a former Fulbrighter, to discuss how the various institutions might work together to assist in the training of the public school teachers with the support of the U.S. Embassy and the resources available through the Office of English Language Programs. The RELO met as well with Iván Suazo, the incoming president of ANPI to emphasize the necessity of strengthening the organization, which represents English teachers at all levels and institutions from throughout the nation.



ECUADOR

International Education Week in Ecuador

Quito, Ibarra, Otavalo, and Loja were sites for various activities sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in recognition of International Education Week (the third week in November). U.S. Ambassador Kristie Kenney and CAO Collette Christian participated in ceremonies for the embassy's donation of materials to municipal libraries, a photo lab to an art institute, and a Zoom Text to a school for the blind. The Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission made presentations at three universities to promote interest in Fulbright programs. A representative from the Lincoln Resource Center shared useful information about the IRC, and RELO Michael Rudder spoke about the increasing importance of learning English. In addition, the RELO conducted methodology workshops with English teachers at three universities and made a presentation at the Fulbright Commission on the role of the Internet in English language teaching. In Loja there was also a contest for videos about the Fulbright experience, and the winner was awarded a trip to the U.S.

X National Congress of Ecuador TESOL

The Center for the Study of Foreign Languages in Guayaquil was the site for the X National Congress held November 13-15, 2003. More than 300 English teachers and program administrators from public and private academic institutions participated in the conference, which included several plenary sessions and numerous workshops on important aspects of English language teaching. RELO Michael Rudder was one of the featured plenary speakers, and he also conducted three workshops on teacher observation for professional enhancement and the role of grammar in the curriculum. The conference concluded with a presentation by the Center Coordinator, Dennis Maloney, on re-defining the affiliate's vision for the future.

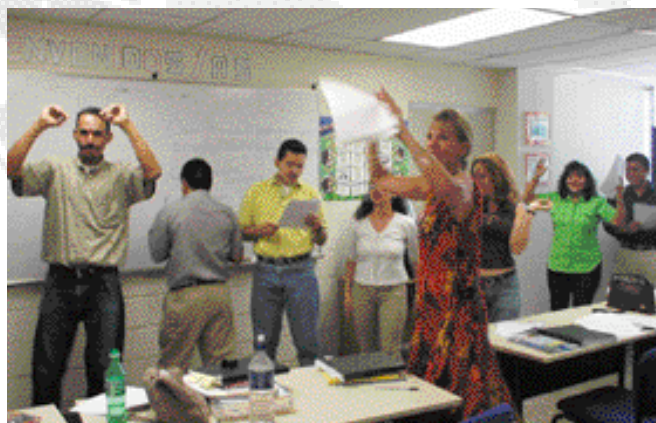
Academic Specialist Visit to BNCs in Ecuador

The Binational Centers in Guayaquil and Cuenca benefited from the expertise and visit of English Language Specialist Professor Ron Schwartz from the University of Maryland Baltimore County August 4-18, 2003. In addition to evaluating the overall program of English Language Teaching at the two BNCs, Professor Schwartz helped teachers and coordinators reflect on the ratio of teacher talk-student talk and pointed out the shortcomings of a passive learning environment in which the teacher talks and the students listen. The participants gained new ideas for increasing active student participation in class as well as for evaluating the students' oral language proficiency. The U.S. embassy strongly supports both BNCs, which play an instrumental role in the growth of English in Ecuador.

EL SALVADOR

Academic Specialist in El Salvador

August 25-September 3, 2003 sixty primary school teachers of English from the three regions of El Salvador received an intensive two-day workshop in methodology for teaching children. The workshops, conducted by U.S. academic specialist Dr. Paulette Dale from Miami Dade Community College, included a variety of motivating activities, such as games and songs. The participating teachers left the training sites with fresh ideas and a lot of materials. In spite of very limited resources and a lack of qualified teachers, the Ministry of Education is promoting English language teaching in all public elementary schools, beginning with about fifty pilot schools.



Dr. Dale Leading Teachers in "Hokey-Pokey"

ELF in El Salvador

English Language Fellow Anna Rodriguez Remos has implemented a successful series of training workshops for teachers of English at the Universidad Católica de Occidente in El Salvador, where she is evaluating the university's intensive English program and revising the curriculum. Her workshops in December focused on reflective teaching practices and the learner-centered classroom, and subsequent upcoming workshops will deal with other specific needs of her audiences. In addition to her work at UNICO, Ms. Remos has also made presentations at the Universidad de Don Bosco and at a conference sponsored by the Ministry of Education.

During his first year in the region, RELO Michael Rudder made one to three trips to each of the eight designated countries, with the exception of Venezuela. He regrets that his first trip was canceled due to unfortunate circumstances. However, he is looking forward to making this trip in the near future and hopes to collaborate with his professional contacts to initiate projects for the enhancement of English Language Teaching in Venezuela.

TESOL Convention Grantees 2004

Congratulations to the following grantees to attend the TESOL Convention in Long Beach, California March 30-April 3, 2004!

Ms. Inés Torres de Muñoz, Research and Service English Center,

Universidad Particular de Loja, Ecuador

Ms. Gladys Salgado, Coordinator of the Department of Foreign Languages, National Autonomous University of Honduras, Honduras

Ms. Rina de Góngora, Director of Courses, Instituto Guatemalteco Americano, Guatemala

Mr. Norman Huerta, Academic Coordinator, Centro Cultural Nicaraguense Norteamericano, Managua, Nicaragua

The grants for \$1,000 are made possible through the support of the Office of English Language Programs and the RELO Office.

"The RELO Review"

on-line at <http://sanjose.usembassy.gov>

Submit articles to the Editor, Carmen Chinchilla,

at chinchillaCE@state.gov

RELO Office, U.S. Embassy, San José, Costa Rica

Michael Rudder, RELO RudderME2@state.gov

Carmen Chinchilla, RELO Assistant ChinchillaCE@state.gov

Tel: (506) 220-3939, ext. 2206 / 2283

Fax: (506) 232-7944

Website: <http://sanjose.usembassy.gov>